



# LAST MONTH IN BURMA

## News from and about Burma

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### UN Burma expert warns General Assembly: failing to act on crimes will 'embolden' regime

The United Nations Special Rapporteur on Burma, Tomás Ojea Quintana, has warned the United Nations General Assembly that: "Failing to act on accountability in Myanmar will embolden the perpetrators of international crimes and further postpone long-overdue justice."

In a hard-hitting new report, the Special Rapporteur repeats his call for a UN Commission of Inquiry into war crimes and crimes against humanity in Burma. He argues that the dictatorship's denial that crimes are taking place, as well as an immunity clause in Burma's 2008 Constitution, means that the international community has a responsibility to act.

The European Union, which has drafted the UN General Assembly Resolution on Burma, has so far failed to include establishment of a Commission of Inquiry in the draft.

However, several EU member states have publicly expressed support for a UN Inquiry, including the UK, Ireland, Czech Republic, Lithuania, France, Slovakia, Hungary, Estonia and Netherlands.

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### Sham elections condemned

Burma's generals are pressing ahead with fake elections on 7th November, which will bring in a rubber stamp parliament and a new constitution designed to legalise dictatorship.

In the UN Special Rapporteur's recent report, he raises serious concerns about the credibility of elections, saying that the election process was "deeply flawed" and not "inclusive, free and fair".

The report highlighted multiple ways in which the elections are unfair, including the fact that the \$500 registration fee to be a candidate in the election is higher than the entire average annual income per person of \$459.

There have also been reports that regime officials and Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) members continued to harass, threaten, and intimidate voters and members of other political parties. Reports also emerged of widespread vote buying and forced recruitment by USDP members.

The dictatorship has also banned foreign journalists and international election monitors from observing the polls.

### Aung San Suu Kyi reaches 15 years in detention



On 24th October Aung San Suu Kyi reached a total of 15 years in detention.

Burma Campaign UK called for urgent international pressure to force Burma's dictatorship to unconditionally release her on 13th November. Aung San Suu Kyi's current period of detention expires on 13th November, following her being placed under

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house arrest after a sham trial in August 2009. Although there was an international outcry at the time, no concrete action was taken to try to secure her release.

Ahead of the elections in November the dictatorship has increased harassment of democracy activists, banned the National League for Democracy, and ensured that Aung San Suu Kyi remains detained during the period of the elections.

### **Women and children bear brunt of health crisis in eastern Burma**

A new report reveals that the health of populations in conflict-affected areas of eastern Burma, particularly women and children, is amongst the worst in the world.

The report *Diagnosis: Critical*, based on a survey by community health organisations of over 27,000 people in eastern Burma, shows that over 40% of children suffer from malnutrition and 60% die from preventable disease. One in fourteen women is infected with malaria, one of the highest rates of infection in the world. One in seven children in eastern Burma will die before age five, almost double Burma's official figures, which are amongst the worst in the world. The maternal mortality ratio is triple the official national figure.

Amongst surveyed populations, almost one third had experienced human rights abuses in the preceding year, especially forced labour and displacement. Children in displaced families were three times more likely to suffer from acute malnutrition and 60% more likely of suffering from diarrhoea. The odds of children dying before age one were doubled in households forced to provide labour.

Dr Cynthia Maung, who founded the Mae Tao Clinic which treats thousands of civilians affected by the conflict, said, "it is a crime that so many in eastern Burma, particularly women and children, are dying of preventable and treatable diseases. We are doing what we can to help, but without an end to the regime's abuses, this health crisis will continue."

### **Cyclone Giri strikes Arakan State**

On 22 October, a category four cyclone named Giri hit Arakan State, in Western Burma, with winds reaching 258 kilometers (155 miles) per hour. More than 30 people died in the storm and it caused significant damage and destruction to homes, public buildings, infrastructure, affecting around 260,000 people. The coastal town of Kyaukpyu was the worst-hit with an estimated 70% of the town destroyed. Around 100,000 people lost their homes and are in desperate need of shelter, clean drinking water, and food.

### **New flag revealed**

On 21 October, the SPDC unexpectedly announced Burma's new flag, even though the new flag, along with the state seal, the national anthem, and the country's official name - Republic of the Union of Myanmar - should have become official only after the entry into force of the 2008 constitution as a result of the elections.



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**for Human Rights, Democracy  
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